

London Borough of Bexley

News Release

For Immediate Release

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BUDGET PLANNING FOCUSES ON ECONOMIC GROWTH

Bexley's Cabinet is recommending a Council Tax increase of 1.9% next year, in the face of continuing financial challenges. The Council's Budget for 2015/16 includes planned savings of £11 million – which will bring to £83 million the amount it has saved since 2006.

Major changes to the funding of local councils mean that councils have to adapt to large-scale reductions in their government grant. Bexley is looking to take advantage of London's economic growth to balance its budget in the years ahead and to build on its recent success in attracting more than £200 million in external investment.

Next year's Budget will see more than half of Bexley's spending allocated to social care, as the Council focuses on protecting the increasing numbers of vulnerable residents, young and old. It includes investment in projects to manage demand for complex social care support and a 'social work academy' to address a shortage of qualified social workers.

"While the economy is recovering, Council funding is changing and we find ourselves having to make savings that we never thought we would have to make," explained Council Leader Cllr Teresa O'Neill. "We have made huge savings by increasing our efficiency and our priority has to be to protect the vital services on which people rely.

"We have listened to people's views and more people have told us that they would prefer to see a Council Tax increase than further spending reductions. The small increase we've proposed will secure additional Council Tax income of £1.6m a year and avoid the need for further savings."

Deputy Council Leader Cllr Gareth Bacon added: "We know people would also like to see a reduction in the number of local Councillors and that process is underway. We need the approval of the independent Boundary Commission to do this. Subject to their approval, we expect that changes will happen in time for the next Council elections in 2018.

“Getting maximum value from the money available is one of our strengths and we are continuing to make as many savings as possible in ways that have the least impact. This will mean even more efficient ways of working, sharing services with other councils and the NHS, outsourcing and reducing the number of staff we employ.”

The Cabinet’s Budget recommendations are subject to approval by the full Council on 4 March.

‘ENDS’

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Attachments

- BUDGET PLANNING FOCUSES ON ECONOMIC GROWTH [BUDGET PLANNING FOCUSES ON ECONOMIC GROWTH](#)

